Through Their Loss - Owen Brennan

Through Their Loss is an Irish folk elegy written by Owen Brennan and performed by OB Branán, an artist created by Owen Brennan to carry his vision. It tells the true story of the Hegarty family of Waterside, Derry - a family whose history was shaped by extraordinary service and extraordinary loss.

Joseph and Elizabeth Hegarty raised their children first in Faughanvale and later at **4 Ebrington Street, Waterside, Derry**. According to verified family records, they had **eleven sons, all of whom served in the British Army during the First World War** . Three were killed in action and another died later from his wounds, a loss so profound it was carved into the family headstone.

One of those sons was **Private William Hegarty (4698)** of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. He was killed at Festubert on **16 May 1915**, leaving behind a young wife, **Martha (née Moore)**, who was pregnant with their son, also named William . William never met his child.

William's grandaughter **Myra**, survives today and carries his memory forward. The large family that exists now - more than 200 descendants - came from a different turning point: **Martha's remarriage**. Years after William's death, she met **Robert McGinley**, married him, and together they formed the **McGinley branch** that grew into the present-day family. As the family record notes, *"an entire lineage came to be… today, there are over 200 living descendants and growing who owe their existence to this moment in time.*

This is the true knock-on effect of William's death:
because his life ended, Martha's life changed - and the McGinley family came into being. Hundreds of people exist today because of that single moment in 1915.

Through Their Loss

[Verse 1]
Eleven sons from Ebrington Street,
Joseph and Elizabeth's to keep
All marched out when the call came down,
Four never marched back into town
Etched in bronze, four names kept,
A mother's grief that the stone has wept

[Verse 2]
William went with the Inniskillings' line,
Left Martha carrying, left his name behind
May, nineteen-fifteen, the telegram came,
A son called Willie would never know his face
Stitched shirts at home, made ends meet somehow,
A widow and a mother at twenty-one, only twenty-one

[Chorus]
They gave their all, and through their loss, gave us
A bootprint held in memory
The years they hadn't lived, they gave away,
So somewhere down the line, we'd see today
They gave their all
And through their loss, gave us

[Verse 3]
Years on, Martha met Robert through her sister's friend,
He courted slow, and grief began to mend
A new branch grew from an old root's pain,
Myra's still in Creggan, carrying the name

[Chorus]

They gave their all, and through their loss, gave us
A bootprint held in memory
The years they hadn't lived, they gave away,
So somewhere down the line, We'd see today
They gave their all
And through their loss, gave us

[Bridge]
Four letters came in black, four voices still,
The cost was carved in portland, quiet on the hill
I never knew your faces, never knew your names by heart,
But I'm made of what you didn't get to start
[Final verse, spoken-sung, stripped to near silence]
William, I think of you, strange as it seems,
A stranger thanking a man for his unlived dreams
You never held your son, never saw him grow,
But somewhere down the line, you made room for me and mine

[Final Chorus — half-time, fading]
They gave their all, and through their loss, gave us
... A footnote held in history
They gave their all
(whispered) ... and through their loss .... gave us

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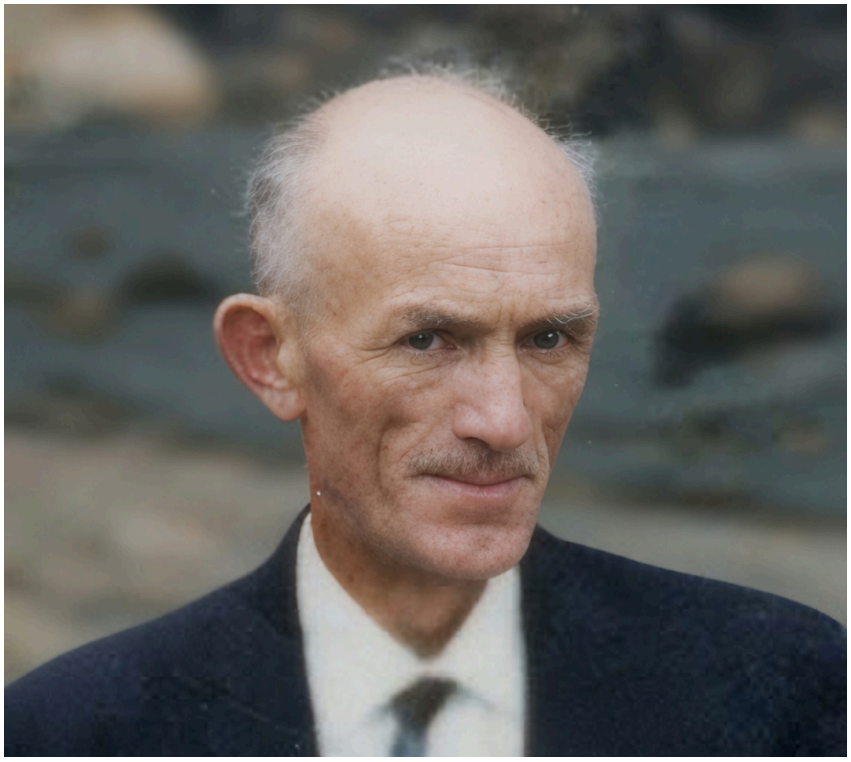

Willie, the son who never got to meet his dad